

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KUALA 01835 070628Z

ACTION EA-02

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SP-02 PA-02 INR-02 /009 W

-----001589 070701Z /10

R 060815Z MAR 78

FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO USIA WASHDC

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 2713

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUALA LUMPUR 1835

USIAC

LIMDIS

E.O.11652: GDS

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE MALAYSIAN SITE FOR VOA TRANSMITTER

REF: USIA 4187

1. PAO DISCUSSED SUBSTANCE REFTEL WITH COUNSELLOR BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION WHO IS THOROUGHLY FAMILIAR WITH HISTORY OF BBC EXPERIENCE AT TEBRAU SITE. AS AGENCY PROBABLY AWARE, BBC WAS FIRST ASKED TO VACATE TEBRAU FACILITY IN 1973 FOR POLITICAL REASONS, GOM HAVING EXPLAINED AT THE TIME THAT IT WAS EMBARRASSING FOR THEM TO HOST FOREIGN BROADCASTING FACILITY ON THEIR TERRITORY, GIVEN SENSITIVITY OF GOM RELATIONS WITH CHINA, INDO-CHINA AND OTHER SEA NATIONS, BBC REQUESTED AND WAS GRANTED THREE-YEAR EXTENSION ON 600-ACRE SITE WHICH IN FACT BBC OWNED IN PERPETUITY ON CONDITION THAT IT NOT BE USED FOR ANY PURPOSE OTHER THAN BROADCASTING. THREE ADDITIONAL ONE-YEAR EXTENSIONS WERE GRANTED TO GIVE BBC ENOUGH TIME TO NEGOTIATE FOR TWO NEW SITES IN SINAGPORE (ONE TRANSMITTER, ONE RECEIVER), WHICH NEGOTIATIONS HAVE NOW BEEN SATISFACTORILY COMPLETED. COUNSELLOR STATES FURTHER THAT HICOM NOW ENGAGED IN DIFFICULT NEGOTIATIONS WITH GOM OVER FINANCIAL SETTLEMENT FOR TEBRAU SITE WHICH IS CONFIDENTIAL

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CONSIDERED TO BE HIGHLY DESIRABLE AREA FOR COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT. COUNSELLOR ADDED THAT INDEED GOM AND JOHORE STATE GOVERNMENT ARE AQUABBLING OVER PERMANENT RIGHTS TO LEASE SITE FOR PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT.

2. COUNSELLOR VOLUNTEERED HIS CONVICTION THAT U.S. REQUEST TO LEASE TEBRAU FOR VOA TRANSMITTERS WOULD BE FLATLY REJECTED

BY GOM. HE SAID THAT GOM HAD EARLIER INDICATED TO HICOM THAT GOM HAD EVERYTHING TO LOSE AND NOTHING TO GAIN BY HAVING FOREIGN BROADCASTING FACILITY ON ITS TERRITORY.

3. EMBASSY SHARE HICOM CONVICTIONS. WE ARE WILLING TO CONSIDER MAKING INFORMAL SOUNDINGS WITH GOM OR EVEN FORMAL REQUEST, BUT WE THINK THAT SCALES ARE HEAVILY WEIGHTED N SIDE OF GOM TURNDOWN. WE SERIOUSLY DOUBT THAT GOM WOULD BE WILLING TO INTRODUCE POTENTIALLY NEGATIVE ELEMENT WHICH COULD ADVERSELY AFFECT ITS RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE PRC AND INDOCHINA. MOREOVER, GOM WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY BE UNWILLING TO DETRACT FROM ITS CAREFULLY-NURTURED NON-ALIGNED IMAGE BY PERMITTING U.S. BROADCASTING FACILITY ON ITS SOIL. IN SHORT, WE FEEL THAT ON BALANCE, GOM RESPONSE TO OUR DEMARCHE WOULD BE NEGATIVE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: RADIO BROADCASTING, NEGOTIATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978KUALA01835
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780102-0575
Format: TEL
From: KUALA LUMPUR
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197803103/aaaadjog.tel
Line Count: 77
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 3733f8b7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3108854
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: POSSIBLE MALAYSIAN SITE FOR VOA TRANSMITTER
TAGS: ETEL, MY, UK, VOA
To: USIA
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/3733f8b7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014